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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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NEVER TOO OLD

PROCUREMENT SECTION

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

To Learn To Cook. About two years ago, the Chamber of Commerce of Nowata, Oklahoma, decided to develop some programs for older people. This northeastern Oklahoma town has a high percentage of senior citizens -- 28 percent of the town's residents are over 65 as compared with the State average of 11 percent. The Chamber was surprised that a cooking class was the first program in which the older people expressed interest. But perhaps, this is not really so astonishing when you consider that some of the senior citizens are preparing food for one or two whereas they formerly cooked for entire families, and cooking for one often leads to lack of incentive. In addition, many in the community receive USDA-donated foods and either don't know how to prepare them or tire of "the same old thing." At first the Chamber of Commerce handled all the expenses. Later, food was obtained from the State agency which administers the food distribution program in cooperation with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. A retired railroad chef was enlisted to teach the cooking class. Then these duties were taken over by a lady who had been cooking for the same Nowata family for 22 years. Attendance at the semi-monthly meetings usually is around 35. Many who do not attend the meetings obtain recipes and ideas from their neighbors who participate in the classes. However, program leaders urge attendance since they feel the fellowship is as important as the information.

SHOW AND TELL

For Bacon Packages and Cured Meat Labels. Two regulation changes recently announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture will give consumers more information on which to base selections of bacon and cured meat products. One regulation amends the requirement on bacon packaging. It will require the window in windowed packages of sliced bacon to be at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and to show at least 70 percent of the length of a representative strip of bacon. The second regulation change requires that all cured meat or products containing cured meat -- such as frozen dinners containing ham -- be labeled to tell the consumer the ingredients used in the curing process. Cured meats have not had to carry ingredient statements in the past since USDA felt consumers generally knew that these products were made with meat and a simple curing solution. As more complex curing solutions have come into use, consumers may no longer be aware of the ingredients used. Both changes will become effective in mid-February 1973.



As you put away the picnic gear for another year, bring out the recipe box with your favorite menus. . . nippy days and hearty stews. . . busy school nights and easy-fixing casseroles. . . holiday gatherings and family favorites.

In fitting your meal ideas to your food budget, here's what's in store at the supermarket: Grocery prices will average steady for fall after some increase earlier this year. Prior to fall, smaller fruit and vegetable crops stimulated fresh produce prices, and smaller pork output plus extra-ordinary beef demand put meat prices well above 1971. However, fall meat prices will be lower than this summer, and prices of many other food items will rise little, if any. Autumn harvests bring prices of many fruits and vegetables down from summer levels. On the whole, your grocery bill probably averages larger than last year. Those thousands of food items in the supermarket are averaging 4½ percent higher in price this year than last. A basket of foods which cost \$100 in 1967 cost \$116.40 last year, and will cost an estimated \$121.40 during 1972.

So, shop with strategy. Begin by thinking about your total food budget. Typically, we spend most for meats, then fruits and vegetables, dairy products, bakery and grain products, poultry and eggs, and other foods. Concentrate on the steadily priced items, and buy more of the higher priced foods as they are on special. Look on your freezer and shelf space as warehouses for stocking up on the bargains.

Plan meat buying carefully. Meat may account for about a fourth of the family food bill.

Beef price relief is imminent. Earlier this year, a record-breaking beef supply from both American and foreign cattlemen was not sufficient to satisfy the booming demand. But now that supplies are larger they are likely to cause a moderate price rollback. You'll see ups and downs in beef prices, but fall's retail prices will average below those of summer.

FIRST AID FOR FLOODED HOMES

When Nature Gets Out Of Hand And Into Your Home. Floods have always plagued mankind. They happen somewhere every year and at anytime of the year. They have no respect for lives or property anywhere -- urban or rural. And dangers and devastation remain even after the waters have gone -- unsafe water supply, undermined building foundations, clogged home heating systems, loose plaster, and a general filthy mess. Pointers on what to do and what not to do when returning to a flooded home or farm after the inundation are given in a booklet issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Public Health Service and other Federal agencies, State agricultural colleges and universities, the American Red Cross, and safety organizations, the booklet is intended to help persons clearing, rebuilding, and trying to reduce their losses. It contains information on the house itself, foods, clothing and household textiles, insect and rodent control, relief and rehabilitation services available, and a checklist of rehabilitation steps. Although we hope you will never need a copy, the booklet is available free from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Ask for "First Aid For Flooded Homes and Farms," (AH-38).

FALL FOOD PREVIEW

Pork is past its peak price period. On sultry summer days, when farmers market the fewest hogs, prices usually go up. In the fall, the volume rises and prices ease. Pork's been in relatively short supply all this year, an aftermath of a cutback in production by farmers squeezed between low prices and high feed costs way back in 1970. The volume is gradually building up steam, but the supplies really won't be big enough to favor prices at the meat counter until late next year.

Fruits and vegetables follow meat in portioning up the consumer's food dollar. This has been a summer of tight produce supplies, both fresh and processed.

Although lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage, and carrots were priced lower this summer than last, most fresh vegetables were moderately higher as fast-rising production costs caused farmers to diminish acreage for the third year in a row. Early fall brings peak harvest and lower prices for potatoes, carrots, and cabbage. From December on, fresh vegetables from Florida will be augmented by Mexican imports.

Growers of processing vegetables planted more to replenish canned and frozen goods. With prospects for larger new packs this fall, canned and frozen vegetables prices will generally remain steady.

Delicious, nutritious, and colorful, red and golden Delicious apples lead a larger fresh apple supply this fall. But other noncitrus fruit crops have been heavily curtailed by this season's capricious weather. After Halloween's apple dunkings, you'll probably find an abundance of Navel and other early-season oranges. Early reports suggest a fine crop developing in the groves.

This summer's meager harvest for many fruits will affect canned and frozen fruit prices. However, clingstone peaches, pie cherries, pears, and fruit cocktail will be in better shape than other fruit and may be featured items this fall in food stores.

Dairy-product prices are near last year's levels, give or take a penny or two. Cows are giving a more generous milk supply, keeping prices down even though retail sales have shown spark. Cheese has been especially popular. You'll note some slight price increases on dairy items this fall, but such dishes as macaroni and cheese and omelets will remain economical sources of protein.

Poultry and eggs present a mixed picture but show potential for fall meals. A tip of the pilgrim's hat for turkeys, as cheap this fall as they were in 1970. There will be more on the market than last fall, too. Chicken will be cheaper than in summer. Eggs, though, after a long spell of low retail prices, will go up this fall as producers trim output.

Hosting for the holidays? Check these for baking and entertaining: Prices of flour, sugar, margarine, and butter are about the same as a year ago. However, raisins, dried fruit, and nuts will be higher. Sugar prices will rise a little, but honey and maple syrup output is up this year after last year's unusually small crops and higher prices. Coffee and tea prices will be up for fall because of smaller world supplies.

SEPTEMBER PLENTIFULS

Gobblers and Goobers Featured. Turkeys and peanuts will offer consumers good buys at the food markets in September. Other foods on the September Plentiful Foods List include broiler-fryers, eggs, dry beans, fresh apples, and frozen french fried potatoes. For October the Plentifuls will be fresh apples, canned applesauce and apple juice, rice, dry beans, wheat products, broiler-fryers, turkeys, and eggs.

COLOR YOUR SUMMER

Plant A Nandina, A Clematis, Or A Mimosa. In most gardens color is a springtime thing. In the heat of the summer, the garden is usually limited to green, green, and green. If this one-color monotony turns you green, think about adding a few flowering shrubs, vines and trees for contrast. The great variety of these plants allows home gardeners to choose colors, heights, and shapes for a colorful and beautiful garden all summer. Considering the small amount of care required by flowering shrubs, vines, and trees, they can be just as rewarding a display as annuals and perennials in your garden. Planning a garden for summer color is easy. But, as the saying goes: Plan ahead. A new publication from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Shrubs, Vines, and Trees For Summer Color," (G-181) can help with your blooming summer: finding the suitable locations in your garden for the various plants, selecting the plants that bloom harmoniously together or in sequence, choosing the plants that grow well in your area. Besides listing and describing different kinds of shrubs, vines, and trees, the booklet gives planting and care instructions and information on geographic locations in which each is best suited. Single free copies of G-181 are available from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

SIGNS TO HUNT AND FISH BY

Conservation And Sportsmanship. To the founding fathers, the magnificent abundance of game and fish was an amazement and blessing of the New World. As the New World has grown older, there is less opportunity for both us and wildlife to roam about. But there is still wildlife for us to see and to hunt. Much of this wildlife is an agricultural crop -- called "farm game" because it is grown on privately owned farms and ranches that produce other agricultural crops. The food, cover, and water needed by wildlife are byproducts of soil and water conservation practices by farmers and ranchers. Stripcropping, hedges, windbreaks, field borders, ponds, and many other conservation practices are signs of good hunting and fishing. Learning to recognize and knowing the effects of these conservation measures can make your hunting and fishing better. And whether you hunt with a gun, a camera or just with the eyes, your welcome on farms and ranches will be greater if you remember the signs of good sportsmanship. USDA's Soil and Water Conservation Service has developed a little guide to both kinds of signs. Tips on identifying the various conservation areas and the kinds of game likely to inhabit each area are given. Along with these are some practical suggestions on good sportsmanship. Copies of the booklet, "Signs of Good Hunting and Fishing," (PA-1012) are available free from the Information Division, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.